

## Awakening by captainwingdings (Greggles\_Lestrade)

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**Language:** English

**Characters:** Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Neil Hargrove, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington, Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler

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**Summary:**

He wasn't supposed to like something so soft and warm and human. He was supposed to stay in the cold, rotting darkness of the Upside-down and he wasn't supposed to have this. A human life. But once he saw Harrington, he couldn't resist. Billy had never seen something like him before, and he wanted more. He wanted everything.

## 1. Chapter 1

Steve Harrington was beautiful.

Honest to God, beautiful. Billy didn't even care that he was standing out in the pouring rain watching Steve from across the street. He didn't care that he was being soaked to the bone and that a breeze was blowing, because the Upside-down was worse and Steve Harrington was *beautiful* .

He wasn't supposed to like something so soft and warm and *human* . He was supposed to stay in the cold, rotting darkness of the Upside-down and he wasn't supposed to have *this*. A human life. But once he saw Harrington, he couldn't resist. Billy had never seen something like him before, and he wanted more. He wanted everything.

Now the more Billy felt at home in the cold and the dark and the rain, the more he felt like he couldn't have him. That he didn't deserve him. Billy wasn't made for this world, he had worked his way in like a parasite and as soon as someone found out that he didn't belong, he'll be cut out like a disease.

Billy didn't want to go back. Yes, this world was too warm and bright, but there was nothing like Steve in Billy's world. Nothing that beautiful could exist in a world that cold. Not only that, the human world was new and exciting. It was like only seeing the negatives of a picture your whole life and then suddenly getting a glimpse of them in color. He couldn't go back. He wouldn't.

Steve was pushing his food back and forth on his cafeteria tray when Nancy and Jonathan approached. He didn't look up as they sat down with their own trays across from him.

"Steve? Are you alright?" Nancy was the first to notice Steve's lack of usual greeting.

"Rough night." Steve answered, letting his fork fall onto his tray with a clatter. He looked up at the couple. "I felt like something was

watching me last night.”

“Some *thing* ?” Jonathan echoed, staring at Steve to see if he was just fucking with them. Not that it was something to fuck about but...he still didn’t trust Steve entirely.

“You think there’s another one of those...things out there?” Nancy asked, looking concerned.

“I don’t know,” Steve sighed, “I just...didn’t sleep well last night.”

Just then, Billy Hargrove walked up and straddled the bench beside Steve. “Aw, does little Stevie have nightmares? Does he need his mommy to come protect him?” He asked in a mocking tone.

Steve rolled his eyes at him. “Fuck off, Hargrove.”

“But it’s just so fun messing with you, Harrington.” Billy grinned at him and stole a slice of apple off his plate. Steve watched him with annoyance as he ate it. Billy watched right back, staring at him as he crunched into the sweet slice of apple. That was one thing the Upside-down didn’t have, sweet things, and Billy loved when he first discovered the taste.

Across the table Nancy cleared her throat and both boys turned their head to look at her. “Weren’t you just leaving, Billy?” Billy licked his lips and pushed himself up. As he was walking away he tossed the last bite of apple in the air and caught it in his mouth.

“What the fuck is wrong with him?” He heard Nancy ask as he got further away.

“He’s just an asshole,” was Steve’s reply.

After school, when Steve went to open his locker, a folded up piece of paper fluttered to the floor. Frowning, he picked it up and opened it. It looked like it was ripped from one of their English books of poems.

*As an unperfect actor on the stage  
Who with his fear is put besides his part,  
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,  
Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart.  
So I, for fear of trust, forget to say*

*The perfect ceremony of love's rite,  
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,  
O'ercharged with burden of mine own love's might.  
O, let my books be then the eloquence  
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast,  
Who plead for love and look for recompense  
More than that tongue that more hath more  
express'd.*

*O, learn to read what silent love hath writ:*

*To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.*

*-William Shakespeare*

Steve frowned and looked around as if he could figure out who sent him the poem. It wasn't as if someone put it in the wrong locker, everyone *knew* this was his locker. He had gotten love notes before, but never quite as...elegant. He looked around again before putting the note into his math book for safe keeping. The one thing running through his mind as he exited the school was: *who the fuck in Hawkins would read Shakespeare?*

Luckily, there was no basketball practice today so he didn't have to deal with-- Steve stopped just short of the school parking lot. He didn't *remember* parking next to the familiar blue Camaro, in fact, he could have *sworn* he parked on the other side of the lot from Billy.

Of course the man himself was leaning against Steve's car just *waiting* and smoking his stupid cigarette and--"Hey pretty boy," Billy called out as he saw Steve approaching.

Steve sighed and tried to reach for the door handle of the driver's seat but Billy blocked him. He sighed again and looked up at the blond. "What do you want, Billy?"

"I just want to chat, *Steve* ." Billy grinned at him. "How bullshit was English today?"

Steve looked around like this was a prank and Tommy was gonna come out from under his car and kick his ass. "What?"

"English, today. It was bullshit right?" Billy pushed himself off the car and tilted his head. In English class today, Steve was trying not to fall asleep, he didn't remember anything particularly bullshit happening. Billy rolled his eyes at his lack of response. "You should get more sleep, Harrington, your grades'll start slipping." He flicked his cigarette away and stepped even closer to Steve, pulling on the lapels of Steve's jacket in a ruse of straightening them. "We don't want that, do we?"

Steve just blinked. Did he just get threatened over his grades, by *Billy Hargrove* . He was more confused now than when that *thing* -- demogorgon, his brain supplied-- broke through the Wheelers' ceiling. Of course he was more scared than confused when that happened, the confusion came later.

"Why the fuck do you care?" Steve blurted out.

Billy just grinned. "If your grades slip, then we won't have our time together on the basketball court." Although it was too tempting, Steve could admit, he did *like* basketball, even though Billy made it...difficult. Still, he liked the competition, regardless of how rough the competition was.

"And to think, it sounds like you might care about my wellbeing, Hargrove. Even after you smashed a plate over my head." Steve raised his eyebrows at the other teen, daring him to say something about it.

"Misunderstanding." Billy said smoothly. "My anger wasn't at you, *but you were in my way*." His voice rumbled ominously at the last part, a sound that Steve wasn't exactly sure he knew a human could make.

"You were gonna beat up a *kid* ." Steve said pointedly. "I wasn't going to stand by and let that happen."

"I told Max to stay away from him, it was apparent that I needed to tell Sinclair too." Billy said, staring at him. "That's all."

"Right," like Steve believed that, "Well, now you're in *my* way." He looked past the other boy to his car then back at Billy.

Billy paused for a second then stepped amicably to the side so that Steve could reach the car door. "Until next time, Harrington."

## 2. Chapter 2

“You’re supposed to take care of her, Billy.” Neil yelled, “You were supposed to look after her!” Meanwhile, Susan looked on in the background, unable to do anything but wincing with every blow.

“Neil,” She tried to placate him. “It’s fine, she’s probably out with her friends or something.”

“No. It’s not fine.” Neil said resolutely, staring down at Billy on the floor. “He needs to learn this lesson, and this is the only way he’s going to. Some children need violence to understand the rules of the world.”

Billy looked up at him, wiping away the blood trickling out of his nose with the back of his hand. Neil looked down at him, eyes burning. “What do you have to say for yourself, son.”

What he wanted to do was to show Neil exactly what he was messing with. What he *wanted* to do was crush every bone in that little human’s body, slowly, painfully. He would start small and go big, and sooner rather than later Neil would be screaming and crying in agony and it just wouldn’t stop. He wanted to devour him until there was nothing left, nothing of the poor excuse for a father that he was. But he couldn’t. All he could do was look up pitifully from the floor and pretend to be human.

Neil was still looking at him expectantly, and Billy knew that if he didn’t say something soon another punch was coming. “I’m sorry,” he forced out, his voice cracking.

“What was that?” His father demanded. “I couldn’t hear you.”

“I’m sorry,” Billy said louder. “I’ll go find her.”

“And?”

Billy looked at the human, confused as he struggled to stand. And what?

“And you’ll be a better brother to her and look after her from now

on.” Neil prompted forcefully.

“And I’ll be a better brother and look after her from now on.” Billy echoed back.

“And if you don’t, we’ll have another chat. Understand me?” Neil said and Billy thought he could get away with a nod. “I said, did you understand me?” He yelled back and Billy winced.

“Yes, sir, I understand.”

“Good, now go.”

Billy tried not to slam the door when he walked out of the house, or when he got into his car. He bolted out of the driveway and down the road, he wasn’t going to look for his sister, not yet. First, he had to reign in his urges.

He pulled off the side of the road, right by the forest just outside of town. Switching off the car, he pulled off his leather jacket and got out. The air was cool and crisp. It was a perfect day for hunting.

Human food couldn’t sustain him, not for long, he needed fresh meat. As much as he loved sweets, Billy loved the feeling of warm blood trickling down his throat as he ripped into a carcass more. Quick and silent, he dashed off into the forest.

He wanted nothing more to break Neil, make him pay for what he did to him, but that would kill his cover. The human only lashed out because his brain didn’t quite register Billy as a friend not a foe, it was protective. Billy supposed he could have ditched the family and used another one for cover but their story was so convenient, just moving in from California. He saw the chance and he took it.

It was easy enough to change Susan’s memories, to make her accept him. Neil was a little harder to manipulate but he eventually got there, Billy just had to deal with violence towards him. It wasn’t as if he wasn’t used to it already, given where he came from. Max was a little more difficult to control. Yes, she accepted him but Billy knew that *she* knew that there was something off. Children could see



through his charade much easier than adults could, that's why he wanted to isolate her from others her age.

Then she got caught up with those stupid kids. True, it got him closer to Steve but they were smart. They *knew* about things. Things they shouldn't know about.

It was easy to take down the deer. It wasn't used to the sort of predator Billy was, it never saw him coming.

By now he was good at not getting any blood on his clothing, although he was tempted to roll around in the blood and death that lay before him on the forest floor. Maybe one day, one night, he could strip down and do just that. Today though, he pretended the carcass was Neil and ripped it to shreds, gorging himself on the red meat and growling hungrily. Some days he just couldn't deal with humanity.

Later that night, a staticy call on the walkie disrupted Dustin from teaching Steve about DnD. His mother was out visiting her sister in the next town over and Steve was babysitting for the night. "Dustin, do you read me? Over." It was Mike.

Dustin jumped up and ran over to his radio, ready for action. "I read you Mike, what's up. Over." From the couch, Steve raised an eyebrow at the boy. He was way too giddy for shit to go down.

"Just got a message from El. She said Hopper told her that some hunters found a dead deer in the woods. Over."

"Yeah, so?" Dustin replied. "Deer die all the time. Over."

The reply: "It was ripped to shreds. Over." Dustin and Steve looked at each other in silence for a few seconds.

"It could have been a bear." Dustin replied shakily. "Over."

"He said a bear couldn't do something like that." Mike said quietly into the walkie. "He said the patterns were too *abnormal* . Over."

"Abnormal...do you think it's demogorgon? Or a demo-dog?" Dustin asked, then quickly added. "Over."

"Hopper said he doesn't know for sure, but to keep an eye out. Will hasn't been getting any more visions and El hasn't been alerted to anything. We need to all discuss it after school tomorrow. Over."

"Alright. Over and out." Dustin replaced the walkie back on the table and went to sit back over by Steve. "Shit, you think it's another one of those things?"

"I hope not." Steve shook his head. "I did get a feeling that something was watching me last night, I couldn't sleep because of it."

"Fuck."

"Language."

"Sorry."

"This time we can be prepared, if it is one of those things," Steve said, trying to reassure not only Dustin but himself. "I don't want you or the party going to look for it either. It might be nothing, there's no use to get yourself worked up about it."

"I'm not worked up about it." Dustin said quickly.

"Good, just let Hopper do his job and he'll tell us if he finds anything." Steve nodded resolutely. This felt different to him, he couldn't quite put his finger on it.

### 3. Chapter 3

The next day after school, Steve decided to go out into the forest to convince himself that there was nothing to be afraid of. The gate was closed, there were no more demogorgons or demo-dogs, it should be just a nice walk. Maybe it would help him sleep better, knowing that there was nothing left out there to fear. He still brought along his nail bat.

About five minutes into his walk, Steve realized that it probably wasn't the best idea he'd ever had, considering that he didn't tell anyone where he was going and if something *did* happen to him...that was it. "Shit," he muttered to himself and started to turn back. Especially with whatever happened to the deer, what was he thinking?

"So what's a pretty boy like you doing so far out here?" Just when Steve thought his magnificent plan couldn't get any worse. He turned at toward the sound of the voice and saw Billy walking out from a group of trees.

"What are you doing here, Hargrove?" Steve asked with a sigh. That was all he needed, to get into a fight with Billy Hargrove in the woods where no one could hear him scream. At least he had his nail bat, not that he would use it on the other boy.

"Could ask you the same thing, sunshine." Billy answered with a grin, flicking off the rest of his cigarette into the forest floor. Steve looked at where it landed for a second before turning back to look at the other teen.

"Well, considering it's the forest right behind my house..." Steve trailed off.

"You *do* know the police chief put out a warning for people to stay away from the woods, right?" Billy asked, ignoring Steve's previous reply. "But I see you're taking precautions." He nodded at the nail bat that Steve was holding tightly.

"There was a warning?" Steve didn't hear anything about it, other

than what he had heard with Dustin over the radio.

“Yeah, you didn’t hear it come over the PA at school? You must have been asleep. Again.” Billy gave him a grin. “Regardless, you shouldn’t be out here.”

Honestly, Billy was probably right, Steve had taken to sleeping in homeroom when they were going over the morning announcements since it wasn’t really anything important, and if there was people would be talking about it in the halls. “Well, neither should you,” Steve said. “What *are* you doing here, Billy?”

Billy just shrugged. “Saving your sorry ass by the looks at it.”

Steve leveled him with a stare. “Thanks but no thanks. I don’t need your help, Billy, just go home. It’s dangerous out here, or haven’t you heard?”

The other teen let out a loud laugh that scared the birds from the nearby trees. “Oh Harrington, I can take on anything in these woods.”

Steve scoffed at that but couldn’t just tell Billy flat out that he’d seen scarier things in his nightmares than the teen. But then again, he couldn’t just let Hargrove stay in the woods with that kind of holier-than-thou attitude and have a chance encounter with something from the Upside-down. He didn’t like the other teen but he didn’t want to see him dead either. “Sure.” Was all Steve said.

“What, you don’t believe me?” Billy said, locking eyes with the other and walking forward slowly.

“Oh yeah, I definitely believe you, Hargrove.” Steve snarked, taking a step back with every step forward Billy took.

“No, I don’t think you do.” Billy said with a low voice as he backed Steve up. When Steve found himself backed up against the tree, he closed his eyes briefly and thought, *Shit* . It was just what he needed, being cornered in the forest by Billy Hargrove.

Now, Billy placed his hands on either side of Steve’s head, effectively caging him in, leaning forward so closely that their noses were

almost touching. The blond boy smelled surprisingly good, like cigarette smoke and whatever brand of cologne Billy had put on that day; it was something sharp and deep at the same time, like a cool breeze on a warm summer night.

Steve gulped and reaffirmed his grip on the bat. "You gonna kiss me, Hargrove?" His eyes darted all around Billy's face, he couldn't decide what the other boy was going to do: kiss him or kill him.

Billy remained silent.

Then quietly, "Marry me?"

Steve's eyes widened for a second then pushed the other teen off, scoffing. His heart was pounding in his chest and Billy stumbled backwards with a laugh. "Asshole." Steve spit out, moving as far away from Billy as he could within the allotted space of the clearing. He knew that Billy wouldn't just let him leave, that would be too easy. So Steve wanted to keep his eyes on the other boy at all times because at this point, Hargrove was the scariest thing in the forest for him.

"Still saving yourself for Nancy, Harrington?" He laughed. Steve hadn't answered his question, so maybe there was still hope, in time maybe the human would warm up to the idea of being his. And then what? Steve would become his mate and they would live happily ever after? Unlikely.

Steve was about to tell him to "leave Nancy out of this." Unfortunately, a cry sounded through the forest before he got the chance. An inhuman cry.

The two teens looked at each other and Steve knew that he had to get Billy out of there. Now.

Steve ran over and grabbed Billy's wrist, pulling him away from the direction of the scream. "Come on, come on!" He just hoped that he wasn't leading the other boy farther into the woods. He kept his hand tightly around the baseball bat and Billy's wrist, he didn't want to lose either one of them.

Billy was surprised that Steve had the heart to grab him along to run away from whatever noise that was coming from further inside the forest. After all, Billy put him through and the human still wanted to save him. The thought made him stumble a bit as he ran, making Steve hold tighter onto his wrist to pull him along. What did it mean? Did Steve really care for him, deep down? Enough that he didn't want him dead, that was for sure. There was the opportunity for Steve to bail and leave Billy in the woods, but he didn't. Why?

Soon enough they broke out of the forest and into Steve's backyard. They ran stumbling through the backdoor, Steve locking and pulling the curtain behind them.

They looked at each other, both out of breath from their run -- Steve more so than Billy was. "What the fuck was that?" Billy asked, watching Steve closely. Billy had never heard a sound like that before, not even in the Upside-down.

"I don't know...a bear?" Steve lied. All Steve knew was that it wasn't human, whether it came from the Upside-down (likely), was a different story. But Steve really didn't want to have to explain the Upside-down to Billy Hargrove. That did not sound like a good time and he wanted to avoid it if all possible.

"What the fuck kind of bears do you have here in Indiana?"

Steve hesitated for a second before saying, "Dangerous ones."

"Now I know why you brought the baseball bat, Jesus." Steve nodded and ran a hand through his hair, the bat lay forgotten on the floor. "So," Billy sauntered up to him, mood changed, licking his lips, "this is *King* Steve's house then?" He made a show of looking around obnoxiously.

"Yeah, don't jizz yourself." Steve rolled his eyes, of course after rescuing Billy from whatever was in the forest, he still found a way to be an asshole. "Here, let me give you a tour." He went over, grabbed Billy's wrist again and pulled him toward the front door. "This is the front door," He opened it and pushed blond out.

"Hey-"

“*Don’t* go out in the woods again.” Steve told him and shut the door resolutely in the other boy’s face.

“See you at school, Harrington!” Billy called, knowing that Steve was still on the other side of the door listening for him to walk away.

“So where are we going again?” Dustin asked as he rode his bike into the forest behind the other members of the party. He just wanted a clarification because he could not *believe* the stupid thing they were currently riding their bikes to.

“We’re going to go see where Hopper found the deer. We have to see if it’s from the Upside-down!” Mike yelled over his shoulder.

“And what if it is?” Luke yelled back as he tried to keep up. Lucas was with Dustin, it seemed to him that they should be staying *away* from where the deer got ripped apart.

“Then we get ready!” Mike called back.

It was quiet when the kids stopped on the edge of the clearing. No sounds of birds, the wind through the trees, only the sounds of their harsh breathing. In front of them was red. They had only seen that much red inside of the horror movies that they weren’t supposed to watch.

The ground under their feet squished, red liquid bubbled up from the dirt and pooled around their sneakers. The kids didn’t know a deer even *had* that much blood.

“Whoa.” Lucas breathed out. The air had a strange heat about it, and smelled metallic and wet.

“It’s like...the deer exploded.” Dustin said in awe of the grotesqueness of the scene.

“Gross,” Max whispered. The body had been disposed of, the hunters took care of that, yet the carnage of what happened still remained. She spotted something glinting out of the corner of her eye. Something that didn’t belong out in the woods. Max turned and

walked toward it, her shoes squishing in the red mud, and as she got closer it was more apparent what it was. It wasn't like it was in the center of the mayhem, it was on the side, tucked away like someone had just forgotten they had left it there.

"Max! What are you doing!?" Mike yelled after her. She didn't respond, only pulled out a kleenex from her pocket --she had allergies okay--and grabbed the handle of the knife and picked it out of the leaves it was half hidden in. Her hands were shaking when she brought it up from the shadows. She *knew* this knife.

Max stumbled back to the group, the switchblade wrapped up in the kleenex.

"What? What is it?" Will asked her with wide eyes.

"It's...my brother's switchblade." Max said shakily. She held it out, away from her body, like it was infected, or possessed.

"What?!" "Oh my god." "Are you sure?" The rest all yelled at once.

"Yes, I know his switchblade, it's been in front of my face more than once." Max nodded.

"What does this mean?" Dustin asked, looking around at the party.

"But you saw your brother today, didn't you? You saw Billy?" Mike asked.

Max nodded again. "Yeah, he picked me up after school today."

"Do you...think he's been possessed by the mind flayer?" Will asked. "Maybe that's why he's been acting so..."

"Asshole-ish?" Dustin supplied.

"No...no, he's always been like that." Max shook her head. "Do you think he came here? To investigate? Or...do you think he...did this?"

A silence settled on the group for a second.

Mike was the first to speak. "We'll just have to ask him."



## 4. Chapter 4

A new poem fell out of Steve's locker today. This time it was before school, right in front of Nancy and Jonathan.

"What is it?" Nancy snatched it away while Steve was still trying to read it.

TO ---- (Steve's name was scribbled in pen across the  
top just after the title)  
*One word is too often profaned  
For me to profane it,  
One feeling too falsely disdained  
For thee to disdain it;  
One hope is too like despair  
For prudence to smother,  
And pity from thee more dear  
Than that from another.*

*I can give not what men call love,  
But wilt thou accept not  
The worship the heart lifts above  
And the Heavens reject not,—  
The desire of the moth for the star,  
Of the night for the morrow,  
The devotion to something afar  
From the sphere of our sorrow?*

-Percy Shelley

"A love poem?" Nancy looked up at Steve with a puzzled look on her face. Who would give Steve a love poem?

"It's not the first one I've got." Steve admitted, awkwardly opening up his math textbook and handing her the Shakespeare poem. Nancy snatched that one out of his hand as well and looked over it with

Jonathan peering over her shoulder.

She handed him both of the pages back. "Maybe it's someone in your English class." Steve mentally ran over all the people he had English with, none of them fit, or at least he didn't think anyone would go to those lengths to flirt with him.

"Maybe someone's fucking with you?" Jonathan offered.

Steve could admit it seemed more likely but Nancy shook her head. "No, those poems are too specific to be just from someone fucking with him. Someone took time to pick those out."

Steve shrugged and frowned as the bell to get to homeroom rang. He would see if anyone was acting strange today in English and hopefully this mystery would clear up on its own.

Halfway through English and Steve still had no clue who sent him the poems. Everyone was acting normal. Well, as normal as high schoolers could be in a boring English class, one half asleep while the other half was brain-dead from listening to the teacher.

Steve jumped as a crumpled up ball of paper hit him on the forehead and dropped down onto his desk. He quickly looked around to see who sent it his way, but only Billy was looking back at him. Steve narrowed his eyes and quietly uncrumpled the ball.

Inside was a crude picture of what Steve could only assume to be himself (the hair on the stick figure was a dead give away) drowning under a pile of dicks.

He blinked and looked back over at Billy, who was snickering at him. Mature. It wasn't as if they were seniors in high school or anything. Billy winked back at him before the teacher cleared her throat at the two.

"Alright, if you don't like listening to me," The teacher started, "Then I'll pair you up." The whole class --at least the part that wasn't asleep--groaned. She picked up the attendance sheet and started pairing people off by last name.

By last name. That meant... “Hargrove and Harrington.” Steve closed his eyes and sighed. Of course their names had to be close together alphabetically. Why did the universe just suddenly start to hate Steve Harrington?

Soon desks were scraping across the floor and people were moving their things to sit with their partners. Steve refused to move, until of course he saw that Billy was making no motion to move either, so he decided to be the bigger man and move to the desk beside the blond. It was definitely not admitting defeat.

Billy picked up his book, flipped to the page they were on, and began reading: “And to sink in it, should you burthen love-- Too great oppression for a tender thing.” He looked over at Steve. “Well, King Steve, you obviously get the part of Romeo.”

Steve sighed and began, “Is love a tender thing?...It is too rough...too rude, too...boisterous, and it pricks like a thorn.”

Before Steve could even scan the next line, Billy continued. “If love be rough with you, be rough with love. Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down.-- Give me a case to put my visage in! A visor for a visor.-- What care I what curious eye doth cote deformities? Here are the beetle brows shall blush for me.”

How could Billy read that so seamlessly? Steve was over there tumbling and stumbling over the words like English was his second language and there Billy was practically *breathing* Shakespeare. Steve put his book down in a huff, “What does any of this even *mean*? ” He asked rhetorically.

“Romeo’s being a little bitch about love and they’re putting on masks to go to a masquerade ball.” Billy explained, rolling his eyes at Steve.

“How do you get *that* from it?” Steve frowned.

“Read between the lines.” He shrugged.

Unfortunately, they were playing basketball again in P.E and Billy was being more of a jerk on the court than usual.

“Come on, Harrington! Step it up!” One of Steve’s teammates yelled and Steve started off running across the court after Billy, who was speeding towards the basket with the ball. Shoes squeaking on the linoleum floor. Billy stopped short and Steve ran into him, sending the two sprawling out on the floor, the ball flung away and bouncing off the far wall.

“What the fuck, Harrington?” Billy groaned. He didn’t make a move to get up, considering Steve was laying on top of him and it was kinda nice.

“Why did you stop short?” Steve asked, still dazed from the collision.

“Because I was going to make the basket, dumbass.” Billy said, making a move to push Steve off and get up.

The coach yelled over at them, “Boys! Get up and get back in the game.” Billy shook his head and reached a hand down to Steve, who looked at it for a second before taking the chance and grabbing it. The blond pulled him off the floor easily, his biceps bulging. Steve blinked. Never before had he taken notice of another guy’s *bicep muscles* before. He stood there dazed, again, for a second, as Billy ran across the court to rejoin the game.

When the bell rang for Hawkins Middle School to be let out, surprisingly, the party gathered their things and rushed out the door unlike every other school day. Max said that Billy didn’t like when she was late when he came to pick her up, so they would be out right on time. And they would be ready.

They spotted him leaning against the back of his car, smoking, per usual. The fact that they all ran up to him at once definitely made the teen weary.

“Max, what the fuck.” Billy spat out, tossing his cigarette away as they approached. “I’m not taking all your nerdy fucking friends home.” The night that Billy beat Steve to shit, Max threatened him not to come near her friends again, so he remained leaning up against the back of his car, staring them all down.

"We need to ask you something." Dustin started and Billy turned his head to glare over at him, making the curly-haired boy take a step back. Max swung her backpack around and took the kleenex out of it, handing it over to Billy, who took it hesitantly.

"Can you explain why we found *your* knife in the forest?" Mike asked, staring Billy down just as hard as he was doing to the kids.

Billy opened the handkerchief and found his switchblade, still covered with deer blood. *Oh shit* .

He casually brushed it off with a shrug, wrapping the knife back up and pocketing it. "Must have lost it in there."

"What were you doing in the forest?" Lucas asked skeptically.

Looking directly at him, Billy answered. "Why the fuck do you want to know?"

Lucas tried explaining, not trusting Billy as far as he could throw him. Which was not at all. "Your knife was covered in blood at the scene of the crime-"

"*Scene of the crime* ?" Billy said incredulously.

"Yeah, a deer got ripped apart. Your knife was nearby." Mike said, crossing his arms, not ready to back down.

"Yeah, so?"

"Covered in blood?" Max added.

Billy sighed, pursing his lips in thought for a second. "Fine. Sometimes I go out in the forest...with girls." He shrugged as if it was no big deal.

The party looked at one another in confusion.

"Sex." Billy said dully. There was more confusion from the party.

Will finally spoke up, "Then why was your knife there? This place was too far into the forest for...that."

“Yeah, and it was covered in blood, like it’d been used or something.” Mike added with a nod.

Billy shrugged again. “So? Someone else must have found it and used it. What the fuck are you suggesting? That I killed this deer? Ripped it apart with my knife?” He ran his hand over his chin. “Fucking stupid idea. Just because my blade was there?” He sneered at the kids and spun quickly, started to walk over to the driver’s seat of his Camaro. “Max, let’s go.”

“But-” Max started.

“I said let’s go!” Billy roared back and slammed the door behind him as he got into the car. Max shrugged at the rest of the guys and quickly went to get into the passenger’s seat. The rest of the tweens had to scramble out of the way lest they be hit by Billy speeding out of the parking lot, music blaring.

## 5. Chapter 5

“So you found his switchblade in the forest, so?” Steve asked while he was making the party (minus Max) some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Cutting off the crust and everything.

“It was in the clearing where they found the deer. Tell me that isn’t suspicious.” Dustin said, *knowing* that Billy was up to something no good.

Steve sighed and turned around, leaning up against the counter. “Just because his knife was there doesn’t mean-”

Mike cut off his excuses. “Doesn’t mean he had anything to do with the deer? You didn’t see it, Steve, the scene was *bloody* .”

“Besides,” Lucas began, “You should know as well as anyone how dangerous he is.”

“And you think he tore apart a deer?” Steve shook his head. “No, that’s insane. There’s these things call *coincidences* and I think this is one of them.”

“Then you go talk to him.” Will said with a shrug. “He might actually talk to you.”

Steve frowned. “Wait you talked to him about this?” The kids knew how delicate the situation with the Upside-down was, and if this was anything related to that, telling Billy *anything* would be signing their death sentence. “Why would you even mention anything about it to him? If the deer was *ripped apart* and it had anything to do with the Upside-down, why would you even bring him into something like this?” Steve had to stop himself from yelling at them all. He took a few breaths to calm down.

“We needed to see why it was there.” Mike explained after a few seconds. They had never really seen Steve this mad before. “We didn’t tell him anything about the Upside-down.”

Steve sighed, running his fingers through his hair. “I know, I’m sorry,

I just...the less people who know the better.” He turned back around and continued to work on the sandwiches, plating them up. “I’ll go talk to him, see what he knows. He’s been acting strange lately anyway.”

“Strange?” Dustin asked.

Steve shook his head. “Don’t worry about it, it’s probably nothing.”

Billy was working on his Camaro when Steve pulled up. He approached cautiously, not trusting Billy with a wrench in his hand. Beside him on a small table was a radio, cranked up loud and blasting some sort of rock music that Steve wasn’t familiar with. “Hey.” He yelled over the guitar solo.

Billy looked up and over at Steve, he had heard his car approached despite the music but decided to take the ‘casually working, oh hi I didn’t hear you’ route. He grabbed a rag and wiped the oil off of his hands, turning the radio down just slightly as soon as his hands were clean. Billy never turned down his music for anyone, so Max started to spy out the window to see what was going on. Her eyes widened when she saw Steve standing there.

“What the fuck are you doing here, Harrington?” Billy asked and tossed the rag onto his shoulder. He was wearing a plain white shirt with the sleeves cut off, oil and grease stains all over it. Steve definitely felt that it shouldn’t look as hot as it did on the other teen. Since when did he start having these ideas and *feelings* about Billy Hargrove?

“You spooked the kids, they wanna know what’s going on.” Steve said, hands perched on his hips. He then looked over at the open hood of the Camaro. “What are you doing?”

Billy lit up a cigarette. “Oil change.”

Steve looked at him like he was insane. “You can do that yourself?”

Now it was time for Billy to look at Steve like he was insane. “Yes?” He took a deep drag from his cigarette. “What were you doing here



again?”

“...Oh... the kids wanted to know what the fuck you were doing so far in the forest.” Steve had to snap himself out of his thoughts.

Billy sighed, his cigarette hanging off his bottom lip. “I already told the twerps, I wasn’t.”

“Well they don’t believe you. They found your switchblade there.” Steve trailed off, as if that would make Billy tell him the truth. He didn’t know what to believe, honestly. Maybe the blade was there before the incident with the deer but Steve could have sworn that he had seen Billy flipping it around a few days before that. He didn’t believe that Billy had anything to do with the deer, how could he? He was a teenage boy, not a monster. “Look, if you went to go see for yourself, whatever, we just wanna know, *they* want to know that you didn’t have anything to do with...whatever happened.”

Billy stepped forward. “Why do they think I would do something like that?” He asked quietly.

“Well, you’re violent for one. I don’t think you had anything to do with it but...you know how kids are, they blow everything out of proportion. You’re not *just* an asshole to them, you’re...a psychopathic killer in their eyes.” Steve explained.

“And what am I to you, Harrington?” Billy gave Steve a cheeky smile.

Steve gave him a flat expression. “You’re just an asshole.”

Billy scoffed and before he looked away Steve could have sworn there was a look of hurt on his face. Although, what did he expect Steve to feel about him after he beat in his face that night? “I’ll tell you what I told the twerps,” Billy looked back at him. “I wasn’t there, it was just a coincidence that my knife was.”

“You didn’t go out to see the deer?” Steve asked, skeptical.

“Why the fuck would I do that?” Billy blew out a huff of smoke.

“I dunno, curiosity?”

"I didn't go out in the forest to see the fucking ripped apart deer." Silence. The two stared at each other.

Steve began, "How did you know the deer was ripped apart? There was never any description of the deer."

"Lucky guess." Billy said smoothly. "Besides, why would you be asking if I wanted to go see the deer if there wasn't something fucked up about it?"

"What do you know?"

"I don't know-"

"WHAT do you know?" Steve demanded.

There was a second where Billy said nothing but looked over to where Max was watching the scene out the window. He always knew when she was watching him. He looked back at Steve and said quietly, "Get in the car."

"What?"

Billy turned, slammed down the hood of his Camaro and yelled, "Get in the fucking car, Harrington." He moved around and got into the driver's side, and Steve quickly followed. Soon they were speeding out of the driveway.

Billy, Steve found, drove like a fucking maniac. He threw his dying cigarette out the window as he spun them onto the flat, dry lot of the quarry. Billy threw the car in park, killed the engine and sat back in his seat, staring ahead angrily.

After about a minute of silence, Steve cleared his throat and Billy gave him an easy look. "Calm down, Steve, I know more than you think."

Steve looked at him like he had grown an extra head. "What? About what?"

"About everything." He gave Steve a good hard look. Fuck, he was pretty. Billy just wanted to run his hands through his big, floofy hair

and pull. What pretty sounds could he make come out of Steve's mouth?

"There's something out in the woods," Billy turned his head completely to look at him, "And it's not a bear." Steve nodded solemnly. "The real question is how does pretty boy Harrington know about it?"

Steve blew out a breath. "Last year, Jonathan's little brother Will went missing. He ended up in what the kids call the Upside-down. It's this...shadow world parallel universe thing with monsters. These monsters started coming to our world and..." He shrugged. "Then we figured out the gate wasn't closed and more were sneaking in...we must have missed some."

"What kind of monsters?"

"Demogorgons, demo-dogs, basically these...gross things with heads that split open like flowers." Steve made a face, his mind flashing to the memories of the creatures.

"That's why you don't sleep very well, isn't it?" Billy said quietly. "Nightmares?" Steve nodded. Billy wanted to comfort the other teen, tell him that there was nothing else to worry about, that the nightmares weren't real anymore. He was pretty sure he was the scariest thing in Hawkins now, he hadn't smelled anything from the Upside-down in the forest for a while.

Billy slapped on a snarky grin for the other boy, he had been quiet for too long and he didn't want to give Steve the right idea. "You need me to protect you, princess?"

Steve fixed him with a glare. "Fuck off."

Billy grinned and licked his lips. He held Steve's gaze for a few seconds before his face turned serious. "There's nothing else out there you need to worry about, Steve. I promise."

"How do you know?" Steve frowned. Billy just confirmed that there was something else out there, something that tore apart that deer, but in the next breath he's saying that Steve shouldn't worry? "You just

said there was something else out there.”

“Something that you shouldn’t worry about.”

Steve took a moment to study the other’s face. “You know what it is, don’t you?” Billy looked out his window to avoid Steve’s gaze. Those big brown eyes could make Billy shout his love from the rooftops if only Steve asked. “You do. What is it? We can fight it.”

“Get out, Steve.” Billy said calmly, turning his head to look at him again.

“No, we can fight this, Billy. You know what it is, you can help us.”

“GET OUT STEVE.” He roared, clutching the steering wheel so tight that his knuckles were turning white. When Steve didn’t budge, Billy grabbed onto the collar of his shirt and pulled him close, snarling in his face. “Get. Out. Steven.”

“No.” Said Steve defiantly. There was more Billy wasn’t telling him and he could *help* if Billy would just let him.

Billy’s gaze wandered around Steve’s face and Billy knew that he never had and never would meet anyone like Steve again in this lifetime. His eyes lingered on Steve’s pink lips and the second he caught himself doing it he pushed the other away from him roughly. Billy gripped the steering wheel and rested his forehead on his hands. He couldn’t believe he let himself get so carried away.

“Billy?” Steve was confused. First, the other was up in face and Steve thought that he was going to get hit again, then Billy looked like he was going to cry. *What the actual fuck?* He hesitated, studying the teen, before asking, “Are you okay?”

“Just leave?” Came the answer, softly. “Please?” Steve couldn’t say no to that, so with a nod, he slowly got out of the car, his head buzzing with unanswered questions.

It took Billy another good minute to lift his head off of his hands, give Steve a sad look, and started the car. He pulled out of the flat land of the quarry slowly, and onto the street.

Steve shook his head and asked the universe: “Who are you Billy Hargrove”

When Steve finally made it back to his car that he had parked in front of the Hargrove house, Billy’s car wasn’t there.

## 6. Chapter 6

Billy wasn't at school the next day and Steve found himself wondering why the fuck he cared. Since when did he care if Billy Hargrove was at school or not? *Since he saw that look on Billy's face when he pulled out of the quarry* . He sighed and closed his locker. Maybe he could talk to Max, see if her brother made it home last night, if he was alright. Steve didn't want to think too closely on his feelings about Billy, they were too unstable at the moment.

The announcement came in the middle of sixth period. "Attention students, attention all students. This is Principal Mathers," A woman's voice came over the intercom, making everyone stop what they were doing and look up at the mysterious box on the wall. "We have had an urgent message from the Hawkin's police stating that *no one* should go into the forest until further notice. There is a wild animal loose and they fear that it might be rabid. There have been two more attacks on wildlife and they want to take the utmost precautions when dealing with this situation. They say that if anyone is caught within the boundaries of the woods there will be very serious repercussions. This is not something to take lightly. Again, do not go into the forest until further notice. Thank you and have a good day." The intercom clicked dead.

Automatically murmurs started to rise. A *rabid* wild animal? The kids around Steve whispered but he didn't share their enthusiasm with the new event. What he did know was this: Hopper would have kept it to the group if he knew for *sure* that it was something from the Upside-down. So maybe it was really as simple as a wild animal, they wouldn't know for sure unless they caught it.

The bell rang for class to be over and Steve found Nancy and Jonathan waiting at his locker for him. "We need to talk," Nancy said and Steve sighed. Did he really have to go through this all again? With the monsters and the fighting? Couldn't he just...rest? Just for a little while?

"Yeah." He said solemnly.

"We're all getting together at my house," Jonathan explained. "You

should come too.” You *need* to come, were the unspoken words.

“Yeah, yeah. I’ll bring Dustin and we’ll swing by.” Steve nodded as he took his things out of his locker and stuffed them in his backpack. Although, he probably wouldn’t be doing much homework that night, if things were gonna go they way he thought they would.

Hawkins Middle school was, conveniently, right next to the high school so they shared a parking lot. Unfortunately, the middle school let out an hour later than the high school so the three teens were stuck there for a little while longer. Not really wanting to talk to Jonathan or Nancy today--Steve didn’t know why he was in a mood--he just sat in his car and listened to some music, hoping that it would shake him out of whatever funk he had found himself in.

He must have fallen asleep because the next thing he knew Dustin was smiling over at him from the passenger’s seat and Luke and Max were buckling their seat belts in the back. “Have a nice nap?” Dustin asked with a smile.

“Yeah, thanks.” Steve ran his fingers through his hair and started the car. He looked in the rear view mirror and frowned. “Is Billy not picking you up today, Max?”

“Apparently not,” She shrugged. “Neil’s gonna kill him when he comes home though, he’s *pissed* that he had to take me to school today.”

“Shit,” Steve muttered, so Billy hadn’t gone home last night. He hoped that the other teen was okay.

“Since when did you care about the dick who beat your face in?” Lucas voiced from the back seat.

“We talked yesterday, about the knife you found in the woods?” Steve started. “It wasn’t him, it was a coincidence, like I said.” He shrugged, not wanting to go further into detail about Billy and his little discussion in the quarry.

“He’s probably lying.” Dustin nodded, sure of himself.

“My brother hardly lies.” Max said. “It’s gotta be something big if he

was lying about it, so I don't think he was in the forest."

Lucas turned and looked at her, "Really?"

"Yes. Look, I know him better than any of you, so...there." Max nodded resolutely. End of discussion.

When Steve pulled into the Byer's driveway, right beside Hopper's big tan police truck and Jonathan's crappy little car. The kids from Jonathan's car were already hopping out and heading inside when Steve killed the engine on the Beemer. The kids in his car piled out as well and Steve let out a sigh, "Let's get this over with," and got out of the car too.

They all migrated to the small kitchen, the kids flocked over to the table and Steve took a place in the corner by the sink. Hopper started off the meeting once they were all situated. "Okay, so here's what we know: There have been three attacks on animals. Two deer and one bear. They've been ripped apart, almost unrecognizable." *Shit*, Steve thought, *A bear too?*

Joyce then spoke up, "Will hasn't been getting any visions or anything, there's been no sign of whatever those vines were from the Upside-down, no rotting trees." She shook her head. "The only thing that's weird is the deaths. Have you kids noticed anything?"

The resounding answer around the table was no. The animal deaths were the only strange thing that had been happening in the little town of Hawkins.

"Well, El seems to think that it's something to do with the Upside-down." Hopper explained, "But she won't say anything more than that."

"Then we should leave it alone." Steve shrugged.

"But it's escalating. What if it attacks a human next?" Mike shook his head.

"It's probably an escaped animal from Hawkins lab," Jonathan pointed out. "We don't know what'll do next."



Hopper shook his head, "I already talked to the lab, they don't have anything that could have escaped. They're still trying to rebuild after the demo-dogs. They didn't experiment on animals."

"Thank God." Nancy added.

"There's still nothing we can do." Steve pushed himself off the counter.

"We can set traps?" Dustin suggested.

Hopper shook his head again. "The killings were on opposite ends of the forest practically. We would have to put up the traps basically everywhere for them to be effective." He sighed, "No, lets just keep our eyes and ears open and whatever you do, do *not* go into the forest to find this thing. If it can tear apart a bear, just think what'll do to you."

After confirming that Dustin and Max were going to stay at Will's house to talk about a DnD campaign, Steve headed home. Hopefully he could start on his homework, or take a nap, whatever seemed more appealing when he reached his house. He was betting on that nap.

The house was empty, as usual, by the time Steve arrived. His parents were on a three month cruise around the world to celebrate their anniversary or something. Steve really didn't care anymore. It wasn't as if they chose to be a part of his life anyway, that was their shitty decision and at this point in Steve's life, there was really nothing more he could do about it.

It was a chance thing that he glanced out the kitchen window while he was getting water for his late afternoon nap, when he saw him. "Shit." Steve sat the half full glass on the counter and ran over to the backdoor, flinging it open and running out to the other teen.

Billy was nonchalantly smoking a cigarette. The only thing that was different about him than every other day was that he was covered in blood. "Fuck! Billy, are you alright?"

“Yeah, pretty boy.” Billy grinned. “I told you not to worry about me.” Blood was all over his face, even in his *hair* but he was acting like nothing out of the ordinary was going on.

What else could Steve do when a head-to-toe bloody Billy Hargrove appeared in his backyard after ditching school that day? He grabbed Billy’s arm angrily and dragged him into the house. So much for his nap.

Billy tossed his cigarette out before Steve dragged him into the house. He was marched upstairs and into Steve’s ensuite bathroom where he was pushed unceremoniously down on the closed lid of the toilet. Billy just looked up at him with soft eyes as Steve’s eyes darted around the other boy’s body, checking for wounds. “What happened?” Steve put his hands on his hips and looked down at Billy once he was done with his assessment. Nothing amiss, except being covered in blood. *God, it was like he rolled around in it or something .*

Billy shook his head and shrugged. “Nothing.”

Steve blinked. “Nothing? You have blood all over you because nothing happened?” Billy shrugged again. “Did you get into a fight? Did you *kill* someone?” Steve’s mind automatically went to the two deer and the bear that got killed. Did he stumble on the sites of the killings? The kids *did* say there was a lot of blood in the area around the deer. Maybe Billy tripped and fell and...

Why wasn’t Billy saying anything? He was just looking up at him with those big blue eyes and, “What?” Steve found that he was unknowingly stripping Billy of his clothes, the other’s jacket and shirt were already tossed onto the floor.

“Nothing.” Billy grinned at Steve fussing over him. He liked it a lot, it meant that he was slowly winning the human over, subconsciously if nothing else.

Steve took a step back awkwardly. “Just...take a shower, I’ll get you some clean cloths.” He made a hasty retreat to his bedroom, closing the bathroom door behind him.

Steve took a few deep breaths with his forehead against the bathroom

door before he pushed himself away to go find Billy some clothes that might actually *fit* his thick frame. “Stop thinking about that, Harrington,” Steve muttered to himself as he searched his drawers for some clothes.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Your comments give me life guys. Thank you so much for the outpouring of love on this fic!

## 7. Chapter 7

Billy took a nice cold shower and, reluctantly, washed off all the blood. He was glad that Steve didn't notice that the bloodstains were mostly apparent around his mouth, although Harrington probably wouldn't notice if he fell down a hole in the center of town. The other boy probably wouldn't figure out who was sending him those poems even if Billy actually handed one he had just ripped out of the book in front of him. Steve wasn't stupid but sometimes he could put on blinders to what was really going on around him.

Billy took a look at himself in the mirror, no hot showers meant no steam, and tried to fix his wet hair so it was somewhat presentable. He winked at himself and walked out of the bathroom, only a towel slung low around his waist.

Steve was sitting on the bed, staring off into space, and jumped when he heard the bathroom door open. He grabbed the stack of clothes and handed them over to Billy, not looking him in the eye. *Seriously Harrington what is wrong with you?* Steve asked himself, *It's not like you don't see the guy naked in the shower during PE.*

"Shit, you're freezing." Steve jumped as his fingers touched Billy's as he handed off the clothes. "You know we have hot water right? You don't even have to wait for it."

Billy grinned at him. "I know."

"So what? You took a cold shower for fun?" Steve frowned, he couldn't get a handle on understanding Billy. First, he was a dick and almost killed him, next he was annoying but kinda better?, then he showed up in Steve's backyard covered in blood. Steve didn't know what to think.

"Maybe."

Steve just stared at him for a second before throwing his hands up. "Whatever. I'm gonna go order some pizza, what kind do you want?"

"Whatever's fine," Billy answered, trying not to look surprised that

Steve was basically asking him to stay for dinner. “No pineapple.” He then added quickly, remembering the first time he tried pineapple (fruit was not supposed to try and eat you back).

Steve gave him a look, “Alright,” then left him to his own devices in his room.

If Billy said he didn’t take a deep whiff of the clothes Steve gave him before he put them on, he would be a liar. The t-shirt was far too tight on him, outlining almost every muscle of his torso, and the bottom of the sweatpants dragged on the floor. He didn’t remember Steve being *that* much taller than him. He shrugged and gathered his bloody clothes from the bathroom floor and headed downstairs to go and bother Steve in the kitchen.

Steve turned when he heard Billy coming down stairs, his eyes went wide when he stepped around the corner, and he almost dropped the phone when Billy sat his clothes down to reveal Steve’s tight shirt on him.

“Yeah....yeah thanks, bye.” Steve hung up the phone, distracted. He blinked, trying to shake himself out of it, “I got extra pepperoni.” He frowned at Billy for a second before rummaging around in the fridge, pulling out a Hershey bar. “Here, eat this, you look like shit,” and tossed it to Billy.

“What?” Billy asked, looking down at the candy bar. He was familiar with them, Max ate them all the time but she never saved any for him.

“You look pale man, your blood sugar’s probably low.” Steve explained as Billy tore off the wrapper and took a small bite. His eyes lit up. It was sweet! *That* was why Max always ate them. He stuffed another bite into his mouth. “Calm down dude, it’s only chocolate.”

“Fuck off, I’m hungrier than I thought,” Billy said, mouth full of chocolate. Steve had to stifle a chuckle at that.

“Here, let me put your clothes in the wash.” Steve walked around and

started to gather up Billy's clothes. "Anything in your pockets?"

Billy hummed and retrieved his pack of cigarettes, lighter, switchblade, and keys. He winked back at Steve, "You'll make a good housewife someday, Harrington." Steve gave him a disappointed look and went to go put the bloody clothes into the laundry.

Billy finished the chocolate bar, licking his lips as he went to go throw the wrapper away. Steve stopped in the doorway of the kitchen, mesmerized by the sliver of skin at the small of Billy's back that peeked out as the other's shirt rode up.

"Earth to Harrington?" The next thing Steve knew, Billy was waving a hand in front of his face. "You still in there, sunshine?"

"What? Yeah, I was just...distracted." Billy gave a cheeky grin at that and Steve rolled his eyes. "With something outside." Billy gave him an unbelieving look. "I thought I saw a bear outside." Steve turned and headed into the living room, Billy followed.

"So why were you smoking in my backyard" *covered in blood* "anyway?" Steve asked, sitting down on the couch.

Billy shrugged. "Coincidence." He sat on the opposite end of the couch, he didn't want to be *too* blatant about his interests.

"Did you like, get taken by the body snatchers or something? You're acting really weird."

Billy laughed, " *I'm* acting weird? You're the one staring at me like you wanna jump me or something." Steve's cheeks burned, he hadn't thought the other had noticed. "So what is it, Harrington?" Billy leaned closer, "You like me or something?"

"No, I'm just trying to figure out what the fuck is wrong with you."

Billy sat back. "What isn't?" Steve looked at him like he was waiting for him to elaborate. "This isn't a fucking therapy session, Steve. I'm not gonna just voice my woes to you."

"Hey you were the one in *my* backyard *covered in blood* , I think I'm justified in asking some questions about it." Steve put his hands up in

exasperation.

"I told you, coincidence—"

"Coincidence and nothing happened and I don't believe either of them." Steve cut him off and Billy just looked at him with a blank face. "Now whatever you did, you decided to come to me for help, so just tell me what you did!"

Billy looked away for a second. What could he tell him? Steve obviously wasn't gonna let this go, so he had to tell him something. The truth? No, that would be too much. Half-truth it was.

Just as Billy opened his mouth to explain, the doorbell rang. Steve turned to look at the door with murder in his eyes. *They were just getting somewhere, damn it!* He stood up, "We're not done with this conversation, Billy," and walked over to the door to get the pizza.

"So you know about the Upside-down." Steve started, grabbing his second piece of pizza. "How? Did Max tell you?"

"No, she didn't say a word to me." Billy said, grabbing up Steve's leftover crust on his plate. "You don't eat your crust? You heathen." He then took an overly large bite of the crust while looking Steve directly in the eye.

Steve gave him a look that said 'we're not talking about that right now'. "So how did you find out about it?"

"Probably the same way how you and the nerds did, I stumbled on it," Billy said as he chewed, shrugging as if what he was telling Steve was nothing important.

"What did you stumble on?" Steve was afraid to ask. What had Billy seen? All alone with no one to talk to about it, he probably thought he was going insane.

"What did you call them? Demogorgon?" Steve's eyes went wide. "It didn't see me though, I was hiding in some bushes." He finished the crust and grabbed up another slice of pizza. He started picking off the

pepperoni and eating them. The pizza was good, but Billy's personal favorite was the meat lovers, for obvious reasons.

"Shit." Steve breathed out. "Glad it didn't see you..."

"Aww Harrington, you care about me?" Billy grinned at the human. Little did he know that Billy was good at dodging demogorgons, he'd been doing it all his life.

"Shut up. A good friend of Nancy's got killed by one of those things."

"Oh yeah? Is that why she's such a bitch?" Billy asked, peeling off the last little pepperoni sliver off the slice of pizza on his plate.

"She's not a bitch." Steve sighed, then thought about it for a second, "Okay maybe she's a little bit of a bitch." Billy gave a little laugh at that. "But some of it is *warranted*, because she lost her friend."

"Didn't she break up with you at that stupid Halloween party? After you spilled that punch on her shirt?" Billy said nonchalantly, picking up his now pepperoni-less slice of pizza and inspecting it.

"You...you saw all that?"

"Who didn't, Harrington?" Billy took a bite off the tip of his pizza. "Not hard to miss King Steve and all his drama." Steve just sighed. "What, you know it's true. You storm out of the party like someone *offended* your dog, and Jonathan swoops in and gets the girl. And you're out on your ass."

"Yeah. She's better with him though." Steve tried to justify it even though it all added up to it being *bullshit*.

Billy leaned back against the back of the couch and turned his head to look at Steve. "And you're all alone. Poor King Steve. All alone in this big house with no one to play with."

"Well you're here, so there's that." Steve gave him a look that said 'haha you're stuck with me until I get your clothes out of the dryer.'

"It's almost if I *want* to be here, Harrington." Billy looked back, taking a sassy bite of his pizza.



“Why *were* you in my backyard anyway?”

“Back at that again, I told you, it was a coincidence. I was walking in the forest and saw some familiar trees and shit and bam, I was in your backyard.” Billy shrugged, he wasn’t going to tell the other that he wasn’t paying attention and following a delightful scent that just turned out to be Steve.

“Alright, that doesn’t explain the blood though.” Steve pinned a stare on the blond. Billy could just as easy be like ‘what blood?’ and make Steve forget all about it but...he really didn’t want to alter the human’s memory like that. At least not Steve’s. Everyone else was fair game but he didn’t want, when this was all over and Steve *knew* about him, to have Steve hung up on that one thing.

“I, uh...there was a deer...I think it was a deer. I fell down and-” Billy shrugged. “There was a lot of blood, I slipped.” Hopefully, Steve would buy that story.

Steve looked at him intently for a minute. It felt a lot longer to Billy because he was just staring into those big, brown eyes and Steve didn’t know that those eyes brought him down to his knees--metaphorically-- every time.

“You didn’t see it before you slipped in it?” Steve asked innocently.

“...No. I wasn’t paying attention.”

“You know there’s actual bears in those woods.” Steve started.

“I know, calm your ass, Harrington, I knew what I was doing when I decided to walk out there.” Billy rolled his eyes, it was cute how Steve could be so...protective of someone that had beat his face in once upon a time. “Again, one would think you cared.”

“I don’t.” Steve snapped, crossing his arms.

Billy reached over and ruffled Steve’s hair. It was so fluffy and it felt like silk under his fingertips. Steve batted his hands away and attempted to fix the now messy poof. With a smile, Billy started in on the rest of his slice of pizza.

## 8. Chapter 8

“Where were you, boy?” Was the first thing Neil said to him when Billy got home. Billy could feel the anger coming off of the man in waves and he knew that he wasn’t going to get out of this unscathed unless he did something about it.

“Took a drive. Then I took a walk. Now I’m here,” Billy said casually as he was walking to his room. “Don’t worry about it.”

“Come back here and face me boy.” Neil growled, and Billy could feel him stomping over to him. He reached out to grab his arm and swung Billy around to face him. “You’re in a whole lot of trouble, mister.”

“I said,” Billy looked into Neil’s eyes, a dull shade of green. “ *Don’t worry about it, Neil .*” The older man stared as if hypnotized for a second before letting go of Billy’s arm and walking away, still in a daze. He would be like that for the next half an hour or so, but Billy really couldn’t give a shit. At least he wasn’t going to get pummeled tonight.

Billy turned back around and saw Max staring back from the doorway of her room. “How did you do that?”

He let out a harsh breath and answered, “Do what?” Of course the little twerp would have seen him.

“What you did to him, it was like a Jedi mind trick or something.” Max started to follow him into his room but he stopped by the door and turned around. She narrowed her eyes and really looked at him for a second.

“Leave it, Max.” Billy warned. “I didn’t do any Jedi mind shit on him. Maybe he just didn’t want to beat me tonight.” Max arched an eyebrow at him. “Seriously. Max go to bed.”

“It’s six o’clock-” He shut the door in her face and, for a moment, he wished he could see through walls so he could see her expression.

## *LIFE IN A LOVE*

*Escape me?*

*Never—*

*Beloved!*

*While I am I, and you are you,*

*So long as the world contains us both,*

*Me the loving and you the loth,*

*While the one eludes, must the other pursue.*

*My life is a fault at last, I fear:*

*It seems too much like a fate, indeed!*

*Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.*

*But what if I fail of my purpose here?*

*It is but to keep the nerves at strain,*

*To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,*

*And, baffled, get up and begin again,—*

*So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.*

*While, look but once from your farthest bound*

*At me so deep in the dust and dark,*

*No sooner the old hope goes to ground*

*Than a new one, straight to the self-same mark,*

*I shape me—*

*Ever*

*Removed!*

*-Robert Browning*

Steve sighed and reread over the poem. That made three. Three poems and zero suspects. Steve let out a harsh breath and stuck the new page into his math book. He had to figure this out, it was getting on his nerves now.

Since it was after school, and Steve had nowhere to be, he wandered off in the direction of the library. There had to be something similar within the three poems. Something that gave away the mysterious admirer who left them in his locker.

He found an empty table away from everyone else --Steve didn't want

other people to see the poems, they were for his eyes and his eyes alone-- and took the three poems out of his math book.

The first poem was a Shakespeare sonnet, the next by Percy Shelley, and the most recent was by Robert Browning. Steve spread them out in front of him and looked over all of them for a good while. That was, until he was interrupted.

"Hey Harrington," Billy sat down across from him and looked at the three torn pages of poems. "What are you doing? You're looking awfully....constipated over here by yourself."

Steve frowned and looked up. "Fuck you." The librarian shushed them and Steve said it again a little quieter.

"What are you doing?" Billy asked again quietly.

"Someone keep leaving these in my locker, I don't know who." Steve whispered. "Why do you care?"

Billy gave him a look and grabbed the three poems to flip them around. Of course he wasn't going to just admit to putting them in Steve's locker, that would be too easy. He wanted to make the human work for it, and he got front row seats to that event. "Start with what they mean and go from there, what are they trying to tell you?"

Steve just blinked at him and Billy sighed. "And this is why you suck at English, Harrington." He took the sonnet and handed it to him, "Read the first one and tell me what it's about. Granted it's a little harder because it's Shakespeare but I have faith in you."

"An unperfect actor...but then there's something about fear? And rage. And his strength weakens his heart?" Steve frowned, looking at the lines of the poem. "And then it goes off and I don't know what the fuck it's saying." He sat back in his seat with a sigh. He hated English.

Of course Nancy wandered over because why wouldn't she? "He's never going to understand it. He sucks at English." She sat down beside Steve and leaned in to whisper, "What's he doing here?" Looking directly at Billy as if he couldn't hear her.

"Shut up, he's helping." Steve whispered and Nancy sat back, grabbing the sonnet.

Her eyes scanned over it a couple of times before putting the page down. "These are the love poems you've been getting in your locker, right?" Steve nodded. "Well this one is saying that she's 'an unperfect actor on the stage', so she's pretending, and she thinks she's not doing a very good job of it, and they're afraid and angry." She glanced again at the next couple lines. "So she's saying here are some poems to speak for me, basically." Nancy sat the poem down.

"Wow, Wheeler, take the fun out of it." Billy said dully, giving her an unamused stare that made her uncomfortable.

"He would never figure it out otherwise. You should know, you're in his English class." Nancy glared back.

"Steve's smarter than you think."

"Steve is right here." Steve raised a hand a little and waved it around. It was like they had forgotten he was sitting right there or something, and Billy seemed to be...defending his honor? "What about this second poem." He handed the Percy Shelley poem over to Nancy.

"This was the one I was there for." Nancy nodded and started reading it again.

"*There* for?" Billy frowned. He didn't like Nancy Wheeler very much for what she did to Steve when she broke up with him --although he's thankful that she did honestly, Steve was *his* even if the human didn't know it yet.

Nancy didn't even glance up at him when she answered. "When it fell out of his locker. So this one is just basically saying she worships you from afar." She picked up the Browning poem and scanned through it quickly. "Now this one is more interesting. More telling." She looked at Steve.

"What does it say?" Steve asked, wide eyed.

"Well, first, is there a girl who's been annoying you?" Nancy asked and Steve shook his head. Billy had to stop himself from rolling his

eyes, he didn't have time for their postulating when the answer was so clearly right in front of them, if they only opened their eyes to see it.

"Maybe it's not a girl," Billy said, standing up and stretching. "Maybe you have a guy pining after you, Harrington." He didn't have time for this, he had to go pick up Max. "Later losers."

After a second of the two watching Billy walk away, Nancy muttered to Steve. "He has a point. What if it's not a girl sending you these at all?" She grabbed up the second poem. "See your name here? The writing looks kinda masculine. I hate to say but Hargrove might be onto something."

The last poem, Steve thought, said it all. It had to be someone who fucked with him. Tommy? No, he'd known Tommy since third grade, and he was strictly in love with Carol (since 7th grade, Steve applauded them on their consistency as a couple). There wasn't anyone else who messed with him... except Billy.

## 9. Chapter 9

“So what happened. Tell us everything *exactly* as it happened,” Mike said as the rest of the Party surrounded Max. Even Eleven was there, Hopper let her hang out with the group while he and Joyce did...whatever they were doing.

“Well, Billy didn’t come home the night before, and so Neil had to take me to school the next day and he was *pissed* .” Max chewed on her bottom lip, not knowing if she should share the rest.

“And?” Mike prompted.

“Well when Billy *did* get home, Neil had it in for him and then he didn’t?” Max shrugged. “Usually if Neil has an idea in his head, there’s nothing you can do to make him forget it, but he just walked away as if nothing ever happened.”

“Jedi mind trick,” Dustin nodded.

“Jedi mind trick?” El asked with a tilt of her head.

“Yeah, it’s from Star Wars, remember?” Mike explained, “It’s where the Jedi uses the force and makes someone think what they want them to think. They persuade them.”

Will quoted, “These are not the droids you’re looking for.”

“But Billy is more like a Sith,” Lucas commented.

Dustin nodded. “Exactly why its worrying. If your brother has these powers, he’s going to use them for evil. Soon the whole town will be enslaved to him. Chaos will ensue.”

Mike let Dustin finish his tale of woe and added, “But how did he *get* these powers? Do you think the Mind Flayer is back?”

Will, for the first time, spoke up, “No, the Mind Flayer couldn’t persuade people like that.”

“Do you...think he’s like me?” El asked hesitantly. She didn’t

remember anyone other than Kali who had powers like her at the lab but she couldn't be sure.

Max shook her head. "No, we're from California." She frowned. "But it's funny...everytime I try and think back on us together in California...It feels weird."

"Weird how?" Mike asked.

She shook her head again, "I don't know...it just doesn't feel right."

"He implanted himself into your memories," Dustin said ominously.

Max looked over at Dustin dully, "That's ridiculous."

"And yet, Dustin might be onto something," Lucas said. "I've always felt like something was *off* about him. At first I thought it was just because he was a dick, but maybe there's something more to it."

"Maybe," Will started, "there's more things in the Upside down than just demogorgons. I definitely felt like I was *watched* a couple of times, but it wasn't....I didn't feel like I was in danger from it. Whatever I was just thought I was interesting, I was being observed. Studied." He shook his head. "Maybe Billy isn't from here...maybe he's from the Upside-down."

The party all turned to look at Will. "Really?" Max said. "Billy is an asshole but he's not a monster. The only thing monstrous in that house is my stepdad."

"It was just a theory." Will shrugged.

"Yeah and Steve said he had a feeling like he was being watched the other night." Dustin pointed out, "Maybe Billy is one of the same things that were watching Will in the Upside-down and now he has a taste for Steve's blood."

"Why would Billy be watching Steve?" Mike asked and Will just blinked at him.

"Maybe he wants to finish what he started?" Lucas shrugged.



“That would be if we’re going with him being from the Upside-down, which he *isn’t* .” Max crossed her arms.

“But do you know that for sure?”

It couldn’t be Billy, Steve reasoned, Billy fucking hated him. He was lying on his bed trying to think of all the people he knew, and if any of them could be his secret poem admirer. Steve let out an annoyed huff, why didn’t people just say what they mean? He guess he could understand if it was a guy, you wouldn’t really want word getting out in that case, but it would still make Steve’s head hurt less. The phone ringing definitely wasn’t helping.

“Harrington residence-”

“STEVE! it’s Dustin.” Dustin almost yelled through the receiver.

Steve winced at the loud. “Hey, man, what’s going on?”

“Stay away from Billy Hargrove, okay? He’s a monster.”

“Whoa man, I know he’s a dick but that’s a little uncalled for, isn’t it?” Steve started to wrap the coil from the phone around his index finger absently. “I mean, he’s been okay to me recently.”

“That’s because he wants to eat your face.”

“What?”

“He’s a monster from the Upside-down and wants to eat your face,” Dustin explained.

Steve blinked. “Oh-kay, how many 3 Musketeers bars have you *had* ?” He leaned against the wall by the phone.

“Exactly none.” Dustin said, “We have this theory. Billy is a monster from the Upside-down because he did a Jedi mind trick on his dad.”

“Jedi mind trick?” Steve shook his head, these kids...

“Yeah it’s when-”

“I know what it is. Why do you think he did a Jedi mind trick on his dad?”

“Max said-” There was some shuffling and Max got on the line. “So you know how my stepdad was pissed because Billy wasn’t home to take me to school and stuff? Well, he was about to say something to him and Billy just said not to worry about it, in this really weird tone and Neil just walked away like nothing happened.”

“That is strange.” Steve frowned. He met Neil, briefly, once at Big Buy when he was picking up some easy, microwavable food for dinner. Susan was nice but Neil looked like he was a hard man to get along with.

“And then when I go to ask him about it, he acts like it never happened.” Max paused. “Another thing,” She hesitated. “When I think back to us as a family in California. Him being there doesn’t seem right. It’s like - It’s like he doesn’t belong there, like someone superimposed him on the memory. You know?”

“That’s-” *kinda fucked up* , “-weird,” Steve said slowly. “Look, I’ll talk to him, see what’s up.” In the background, Steve could hear Dustin yelling ‘He’ll eat your face!’ to which he rolled his eyes. “Tell Dustin he won’t eat my face.”

“He won’t eat Steve’s face,” Max said, her palm over the receiver.

“We don’t know that!” Dustin said dramatically, flailing his arms.

Max rolled her eyes and took her hand off of the mouthpiece, “Alright, see you later Steve,” and hung up. “He’s not going to eat his face, he hasn’t done it yet, has he?” She turned on Dustin.

“Maybe he’s waiting for the opportune time?” He reasoned.

Will shook his head. “No, what about those deer, the *bear* ?”

“Oh shit, that was him.” Lucas’ eyes were wide. “Oh shit.”

“No shit, oh shit.” Dustin said, “That’s what I was trying to *tell you* .”

“No,” Will said again, forcefully this time. The whole party turned to look at him. “He’s eating the deer so he *doesn’t* eat Steve’s face.” They all sat and thought about it for a moment.

“But why wouldn’t he want to eat Steve’s face?” “It’s a good face.” “Yeah it’s a good face!”

Will just rolled his eyes. “You’re missing the point.”

“There’s a small portal, in the woods,” El said all of a sudden. The room went quiet and stared at her.

“But...we closed the gate,” Mike said, a hint of worry in his voice.

“It’s...porous. The gate,” Eleven explained. “It made other, smaller portals. The one in the woods is the only one I’ve found so far.”

Dustin spoke up, “When did you find it?”

Eleven shrugged. “A while ago, Hopper’s been keeping an eye on it.”

“We can lure Billy out there and shove him in, then close it,” Lucas said, clenching his fist together in front of him like he was crushing a bug.

“Wait, guys-” Max started, shaking her head.

“That’s something we could do...” Mike nodded, he thought it was a pretty good idea actually.

“We’d have to have Steve’s help,” Dustin added.

“And weapons if he fights back!” Lucas looked to the other members of the party.

“Guys, I don’t know-” Max shook her head. This was her *brother* they were talking about.

“Look, Max,” Mike came over and put his hand on her shoulder. “He’s an asshole right? *And* he’s a monster. If we can prove he’s from

the Upside-down, we can send him back where he came from. You'll be free of him."

Max sighed, "Alright, if we can prove *without a doubt* that he's from the Upside-down, *then* we can send him back."

"But how do we prove it?" Eleven asked. "This Billy seems good at blending in."

"I think if we make him angry enough, he'll show some sort of sign," Mike postulated.

"We'll have to make him *really* angry then." Max frowned, she still wasn't so sure about this idea.

"It'll be dangerous," Dustin agreed.

"When hasn't it been?" Lucas said with a shrug.

## 10. Chapter 10

They got Nancy and Jonathan on board with the plan fairly easily. Their skepticism about Billy being a monster from the Upside-down quickly subsided when Max told them the story.

Nancy confirmed the existence of the portal in the woods. “Yeah, Jonathan and I were...”

“-investigating,” Jonathan provided.

“We were investigating in the woods and saw a deer that had been hit by a car and dying, and this demogorgon just came out of nowhere and snatched it,” Nancy explained, a frown on her face when she remembered the deer. “It must have been attracted by the blood.” She shook her head, she couldn’t say anymore.

Jonathan continued for her. “There was a portal at the base of this tree, small but someone could definitely get through it. I thought it had closed up when we left but...”

They were all in Nancy’s room, Jonathan lounging on the bed while Nancy was sitting there as if nothing was happening between them. The door was open and Mike thought it was fair game, it wasn’t like the two teens were doing anything gross. They were just studying.

“Well maybe it wasn’t Billy, with the other deers then?” Max offered quickly. *Or the bear*, she thought, although she *also* thought the idea of Billy going up against a bear was kinda cool.

Nancy shook her head. “The demogorgon definitely took the deer into the Upside-down to eat it.” Max let out a soft sigh, of course it did.

“So how are we going to lure Hargrove there?” Jonathan asked. “It’s not like he’s going to just come when he’s asked.”

“We’re going to ask Steve to talk to him,” Will said, “It should work.”

Nancy’s eyebrows furrowed in confusion. “Why Steve?”

“Oh Billy wants to eat his face,” Dustin explained with a smile. The two older teens just looked at Dustin with disgust. His smile fell and he added, “You know, in a monster way.”

Jonathan and Nancy looked at each other for a moment, and Jonathan said, “We should get Hopper to help.” Nancy agreed with this suggestion.

“No, no Hopper,” Eleven said. “He won’t want us to do this, we’ll say to wait and watch him more.”

“Well maybe we should?” Nancy suggested.

“No, Billy’s good at blending in,” Lucas shook his head, “We’d never get anywhere if we just waited. We have to act.”

Jonathan and Nancy looked at each other again, the kids had a point. Nancy looked away and back to the party, “So what? We just get him angry and he transforms? He’s been angry before, it’s not gonna be that easy.”

Jonathan nodded, “It’s going to be too dangerous.”

“Yeah but that’s the best idea we have so far,” Will shrugged. “Maybe you can help?” He was looking specifically at Jonathan.

Jonathan nodded at his little brother, determined. “We’ll see what we can cook up.”

“Be careful when asking Steve, he’s been acting weird when it’s come to Billy lately,” Nancy warned. “We all need to come together and formulate an actual plan. Tomorrow’s Saturday, why don’t we all meet at Steve’s house. His parents are away for their anniversary, so he’ll be alone there. Let’s say, 11 o’clock?”

“Dusty?” Dustin’s mom, holding Tews in the crook of her elbow, frowned at her son, “Where are you going?”

“Meeting with the Party, Mom, I’ll be back later,” Dustin said quickly as he walked through the front door and grabbed his bike.

The gang were all waiting on the street just outside Steve's big house. Max had caught a ride with Nancy and Jonathan, and even Eleven managed to persuade Hopper to drop her off somewhere in town and walked here. The rest of the party were on their bikes.

"Are we ready?" Mike asked, glancing at everyone. Without another word, they all made their way to the front door, bikes abandoned on the front lawn. Before they could ring the doorbell, they all stopped and looked at the thin piece of paper that was fluttering on the the door.

### THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE

*Thou knowest all; I seek in vain  
What lands to till or sow with seed -  
The land is black with briar and weed,  
Nor cares for falling tears or rain.*

*Thou knowest all; I sit and wait  
With blinded eyes and hands that fail,  
Till the last lifting of the veil  
And the first opening of the gate.*

*Thou knowest all; I cannot see.  
I trust I shall not live in vain,  
I know that we shall meet again  
In some divine eternity.*

*-Oscar Wilde*

Nancy ripped off the page and stared at it. "Shit."

"What is that?" Jonathan frowned, reading it over her shoulder. "A poem?"

Nancy sighed and explained, "Steve's been getting these...love poems in his locker. Three so far. But this...this isn't a love poem. Whoever's been giving him those poems, knows about the Upside-down."

“And we don’t know who’s doing it?” Will asked.

“No, unless it’s one of you?” Nancy looked at Max and Eleven pointedly.

“Ew no.” Max flinched back in disgust and Eleven shook her head denying it. Will kept the thought that it *could* be Billy to himself, he really didn’t want to get into *that* conversation.

Nancy sighed and just rung the doorbell. They waited as the doorbell echoed through the large house. Nothing. She rang it again. Same response. After the fifth consecutive time Nancy rung the bell, a sleepy Steve opened the door. He was wearing a pale yellow crop top and some blue pajama bottoms, looking wearily out at the party. His hair was...wild.

“What the fuck?” Steve blinked at them, the sun was too bright.

“Steve, we have to talk about Billy,” Jonathan said after a moment of silence.

“Can we come in?” Nancy asked, trying not to look at Steve’s pajama choices. At least he was wearing a shirt? Well, half of one.

With a sigh, Steve stepped back to let the party in, he didn’t know why, he was still half asleep and not really cognizant of what was going on. They all gathered in the living room, most of the younger kids tried to squish themselves on the couch, Will in the middle between Dustin and Mike. Eleven followed Max’s lead and they sat on either arms of the couch. Jonathan was standing and Nancy found herself in a recliner that she knew belonged to Steve’s dad.

Steve stood, hands on his hips, and looked at them all. “Why are you here again?”

“It’s about Billy-” Dustin started.

Steve put his hand up to stop Dustin. “Look, he’s *not* going to eat my face, alright. Stop being ridiculous.”

“So I’m guessing Dustin’s already filled you in on what’s going on?” Nancy raised her eyebrow at Dustin, who almost sank back into the



couch cushions in embarrassment.

“Yeah Billy is a monster from the Upside-down and wants to eat my face,” Steve said, rolling his eyes. “I get it, you don’t like the guy, but not everyone you hate is a monster. It doesn’t work that way.”

“We need to prove it, Steve, and you’re going to help us,” Mike looked intensely at him, as if that would make Steve agree to help out.

“Oh, am I?” Steve scoffed, he couldn’t believe these guys. Billy wasn’t all that bad, not anymore.

“You don’t want to know?” Jonathan asked. “You don’t want to know the reason he’s an asshole is actually *because* of something?” No, Steve really didn’t want to know. Billy had been progressively getting nice and Steve liked it. He didn’t really understand why he liked it but, it was a thing that happened and he wasn’t going to give it too much thought. Overthinking things wasn’t really Steve’s forte, he was just as willing to let it all just happen.

“And how do you suppose we find out that he’s from the Upside-down, hm?” Steve was now crossing his arms over his chest. Fine, he’d humor them.

“Maybe if we get him angry? Like *really* angry.” Saying the idea to Steve made Lucas realize how truly stupid the idea really was, but Nancy and Jonathan hadn’t given an alternative.

“I don’t think you guys remember what happened to my face last time that happened.” Something Steve didn’t want to go through again.

“Look, we know it’s stupid,” Nancy said with a sigh, “But you’ll have your bat and we’ll be ready this time. We’ll set a trap.”

Steve shook his head. “No this is stupid, how do we know how angry to make him? Because when he beat my face in, he was pretty fucking angry.”

Mike spoke up, “Do you have an alternative?”

“Yeah, not doing this at all.” Steve said pointedly.

Dustin whispered, “He’s been brainwashed.”

Steve scoffed again, “I have *not* been brainwashed, this is just a stupid idea. And what happens if he’s *not* a monster? Then we have an angry Billy on our hands. What are we gonna say? ‘Sorry we weren’t sure if you were a monster from the Upside-down or not’? No, not gonna happen.”

“Fine, we’ll do it without you then,” Nancy said, standing up and walking over to him, pressing the poem into his chest roughly. “This was duct taped to your door when we arrived.”

Steve looked down at the crumpled piece of paper. “Shit.” It was too early for this.

“If you don’t want to help us, fine, but someone else knows about the Upside-down. You need to figure out who,” She said and made a move to leave. The rest followed and Steve was alone again.

## 11. Chapter 11

### Notes for the Chapter:

Thank you all for your comments and kudos! They really kept me going! I hope you enjoy the last part of this fic! Hopefully some of your questions will be answered. (I AM writing a smutty epilogue, but that's just an add on, this chapter is where the story ends!) ENJOY!

When Max got home later that afternoon, she tossed a folded up note through Billy's open door. "Here you go, asshole," She said and walked to her room, her work was done.

Billy frowned and went to grab whatever his kid sister threw into his room. He uncrumpled the paper and read:

***Billy meet me in the woods just East of 18th St. at 10 tonight.***

***Steve***

"Fucking finally," Billy muttered. Steve must have gotten the right idea with the poems. Billy just hoped that he wasn't walking into rejection. He didn't know what he would do if Steve rejected him, Steve was the *reason* he was here in the first damn place.

He remembered when he first went through the portal. Things like him were always curious, always staying in the shadows and watching, so when this new thing appeared nearby, Billy couldn't help but take interest. He had seen one of the demogorgons go through it and return again, so it had to be safe. It was new and exciting and Billy was curious so of course he was going to go through it when the demogorgon's back was to it.

The land on the other side was so bright and *clean* . He had never seen anything like it before. The air was so fresh he could almost choke on it. He scrambled away from the entrance to the portal just

in case the demogorgon decided climb back through, and went exploring this brand new world.

The first thing he encountered were two strange creatures walking under the canopy of trees. The sounds that came out of their mouth were garbled to Billy at first, but as he listened more, he could start to understand their words.

“Honestly, Nancy, I get it,” the male said, shaking his head. The fur on top of his head looked soft and fluffy. “You don’t love me and I can’t make you. It’s fine, I hope Jonathan makes you happy.”

“I’m sorry Steve. I just can’t keep this up. It’s not you.” The female explained. Billy moved to get a closer look.

“No, I’m *bullshit*, remember?” The male, Steve, muttered, kicking the ground.

The female turned, Billy didn’t like the softness of her face and the hardness of her eyes. “Steve, don’t. I was drunk then-”

“But it’s true. Drunk or not, you spoke the truth.” A feeble twig snapped under Billy’s weight and Steve turned to look, eyes wide. In that moment, Billy laid his eyes on the most beautiful thing he had ever seen in his life, and in that moment, he knew he had to have him.

“Steve it was nothing,” The female said and Steve reluctantly turned back around. “Come on, we can talk more at your house.”

Billy followed in the trees above them, stopping at the edge of the forest and watched them go into the house.

“Steve,” His mouth formed around the strange word. “*Steve.*”

After a very awkward dinner --Max was acting strange but when wasn’t she-- Billy went back to his room, shut the door and turned on some upbeat rock music. He looked at himself in the mirror and winked. Yeah, 10 o’clock was a few hours away, but Billy knew everything had to be perfect since this could be his only chance with

Steve. He couldn't fuck this up.

Billy knew that if he wanted this male, he would have to look the part as well. He needed some sort of...guide on how to look, what was attractive to these animals. Billy was good at blending in, he just needed to know *how* .

The first place he encountered was a small gas station outside town. Billy definitely didn't want to go into the town, the lights were too bright, everything was *too much* . Even the neon lights in the window of the shop gave him a headache. The ding of the bell when he went through the door echoed in his head and the soft rock music playing overhead drowned out his thoughts.

The young man at the counter didn't even look up when Billy walked in. He went straight to what had drawn him into the store in the first place: small, flat people frozen smiling at him through the window. He grabbed up the one that had a male staring up at him and flipped through the pages. There was definitely something to work with here.

Unfortunately, he didn't stay hidden for too long. "Hey!" The cashier was out from behind the counter and walking towards the aisle Billy was hiding in. "What the--" Billy leapt up and attacked the man, ripping his throat out in a single bite and spitting it aside.

" *Bullshit.* "

He grabbed the magazine back up, blood started to soak into the back pages and the edges. Flipping through it once more, he took what he liked from each image, a nose there, a smile here, and morphed into something more human like. Next, he needed the coverings that they all seemed to wear. He looked down at the cashier. Yeah, that would do.

Billy lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply, it was one of the things that reminded him of home. Not the cigarette itself, but the tarry smoke that came with it was just like the air from the Upside-down. He bounced along to the music as it played, getting himself hyped up, just like before PE when he *knew* they were playing basketball.

God, he couldn't fucking *wait* for Steve to be his.

Billy was around the back of the counter when the man with the mustache came in. He was trying to look for the sticks that he saw hanging out of people's mouths in the magazine to complete his look when the bell to the door rang.

"Afternoon, twenty bucks on number two." The man said in a gruff voice and threw down a twenty dollar bill. Billy looked at him with wide eyes and tilted his head.

"Going into town?" Billy asked.

"Yeah movin' there from California." The monster grinned, this was his ticket in.

At 9 o'clock, Max stole out of her bedroom window and met Lucas nearby. "Ready?" He was on his bike and had his camouflage bandana on.

"Ready." She nodded, got on the back of the bike and sped into the night.

The place where they were meeting wasn't very far outside the city but it still took them ten minutes to get there on Lucas's bike. The rest of the gang was already setting up, setting up logs where they could hide and generally making the area around the tree free from any obstacles.

Eleven was sitting on a log, staring at the portal throb and ooze. Jonathan passed Max a flashlight when she arrived and set her to work gathering small rocks for Luke to use for his slingshot.

"So what happens if he sees us?" Dustin asked, moving some branches out of the way.

"That's what we want, we want him to be angry," Mike explained. "And he probably will be when he sees Steve not here."

"I still say we should have gotten the nail bat from him-"

"You mean this nail bat?" Everyone looked up to see Steve standing with the nail bat propped over his shoulder. "I still don't like this, let's get that clear," he said, "But, I'm not going to stand idly by while he kills you all, *if* he's a monster." Dustin smiled and went over to give him a big hug. "Alright alright. Enough of that soppy stuff, it's almost nine-thirty and you know Billy is always punctual."

Billy glanced at the time and then looked at himself in the mirror for the last time. Everything was in place, he just had to get out of the house without Neil seeing. He shrugged on his leather jacket and turned down his music just a tad before opening the door to his room to peek out. All seemed silent in the living room, but Billy knew that silence meant nothing.

He closed the door and snuck out the window of his room, a safer option than going through the living room and darted to his Camaro. One thing he *loved* about this dimension were the cars and Billy liked to go *fast*. He quickly pulled out of the driveway and started off to the rendezvous.

The party scattered when they heard Billy's car approach. He was early. Steve stood in front of the portal hoping to God this wasn't the last time that he saw Billy Hargrove. Nancy had his bat and he hated the feeling he was getting with his back to the portal.

Steve swallowed hard when he heard Billy walk through the underbrush. "Hey Harrington," He grinned unknowingly. "You finally understood those poems, hm?"

"Billy- Wait those poems were from *you*?" Steve frowned, he figured he was wrong about that, but it did make sense, in hindsight.

"Duh, Steve. I basically told you that in the library." Billy sauntered up with a grin. "Doesn't matter. What does matter is that we're here, and you wanted to talk. So talk."

"I...um, I just...So you like me?" Steve asked, arching his eyebrow at the other. "Really? But you kicked my ass...I thought you hated me."

“We do things a little differently in California,” Billy rolled his eyes and shrugged. “So the real question is, what are you going to do about it Steve?”

Steve gulped, *shit*, this was not supposed to happen like this. He wanted to do so many things in that moment but his mind was blank of words. And even if he *knew* what he wanted to say to Billy, he couldn’t, the party was right behind a nearby log, listening and waiting. He couldn’t just be like, *yeah I think I like you too? I’ve never felt this way about anyone before, not even Nancy.*

“Steve.” Billy caught sight of something moving behind the teen. “Steve,” but he was off in his own little world, probably panicking, although Billy hoped not. “Steve?” The thing behind the boy stood up, and Billy *knew* that smell. Oh no. “STEVE.” The teen finally looked at him as the demogorgon behind him stood to full height.

The demogorgon opened its mouth and roared and before Steve could react, Billy was pushing him out of the way and staring the otherworldly creature down.

“Fuck, you’re uglier than I remember,” Billy said and jump back when the beast swiped at him. Steve scrambled back against a tree as he watched Billy effortlessly dodge blows from the pale beast. “COME ON!” Billy screamed at it and it roared back.

Will popped his head up and grabbed the axe he had brought with him, “Billy!” He tossed the axe on the ground nearby the blond. As he turned to look, the demogorgon’s claws snagged him across the chest and Billy fell to the ground.

“Shit!” Billy groaned, he forgot how much that hurt. He shuffled along the ground and to the axe, picking it up and throwing it at the monster’s head. It landed in a tree behind the creature. “Fuck!” He exclaimed and jumped up, breathing heavily. His human disguise wasn’t made to be fighting something like that. It was too fragile.

Just as Billy was about to be hit again, Steve came up behind the beast and hit it with his nail bat. It screamed out in pain. Billy’s eyes lit up with joy. Steve twirled the bat and hit it again, this time in the knee, making it stumble slightly, and that was all Billy needed. Just



as the monster turned to Steve, Billy made his play, he scrambled up a nearby tree and jumped on the demogorgon's back. The skin of his hands broke away and his claws latched on, one to the monster's shoulder and the other to the back of its neck.

Billy had fought these things before. He knew it's weaknesses. He knew that the brain, albeit small, was located in the very base of the neck. He also knew that it would be hell trying to break through the demogorgon's tough skin.

The monster tossed like a bucking bull and threw Billy off, his back hitting a tree, all the air knocked out of him. The demogorgon turned on Steve, drool dripping from it's open maw. Steve took a step back, eyes wide.

Meanwhile, Jonathan and Nancy had to struggle to keep the kids from trying to butt in, they wanted to help, but they'd never fought anything like this before, they would be maimed in an instant.

Eleven stood up and focused on the axe that was lodged high in the tree. With a little effort it flew out and hit the demogorgon in the back of the next, making it stumble again and let out a pained roar. Billy, who had caught his breath again, gave an inhuman roar of his own and tackled the beast into the portal.

All was silent.

Steve looked at the portal and his bottom lip began to quiver. Billy had just gone into the Upside-down with a demogorgon. Monster or not, that's a death sentence. Steve wanted to disappear, this could not be happening.

He dropped the nail bat and stepped closer to the portal.

"Steve," Nancy stood up and reached for the teen but then realized, what really *could* she say? She used to think that Billy meant nothing to Steve but, after what happened tonight, she wasn't quite sure.

Steve turned around, his brown eyes sad. "Well...at least we know now," he said quietly. He sniffed and wiped the tears from his eyes. The rest of the party was silent. They didn't want it to go this way.

Billy was supposed to be the bad guy, right?

Steve yelled as he was tackled from behind, a large gooey creature pinning him to the ground. He struggled to turn in its grasp and when he did...he saw Billy smiling back down at him. "So you do care, Harrington."